

EXHIBIT 5



College of Communication, Media, Design and Information

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By Iris Serrano

Headshot of Laura Crimaldi courtesy *The Boston Globe*

In February 2021, 23-year-old Sandra Birchmore was found dead in her apartment in Canton, Massachusetts.

Her death was ruled a suicide until Laura Crimaldi, a reporter with *The Boston Globe*, started digging into her past—including her history with Matthew Farwell, then a police officer.

Her relentless pursuit of the truth resulted in “[Secrets and Lies](#),” which led to the case being reopened and Farwell being charged in

Birchmore's killing.

To recognize her tenacity and dedication, Crimaldi was recognized as this year's winner of the prestigious [AI Nakkula Award for Police Reporting](#), handed out each year by the [journalism department](#) of the College of Media, Communication and Information at CU Boulder and the Denver Press Club. Judges gave special mention to both Alabama Media Group and *The Arizona Republic* for their entries.



"Laura was able to show how police broke trust with that young woman," said [Chuck Plunkett](#), a judge in the contest and director of the capstone CU News Corps in CMCI. "It was just a good mix of dogged reporting with great enterprise writing and great narrative writing."

In what one of her editors called a master class in investigative journalism, Crimaldi listened to friends and relatives who weren't satisfied with the official explanation of Birchmore's death. She also filed nearly 100 public records requests and reviewed extensive court filings and police reports as part of her work, while "spending a lot of time knocking on doors to reach her family and friends directly."

"It bothered me that there were people who had the authority and the means and methods to get to the bottom of this, and they just didn't seem too interested in doing so," Crimaldi said. "And by using my superpower, which is to put things in the newspaper, I could make a difference. I wanted to do that."

Together with Yvonne Abraham, a columnist at the *Globe*, she authored a 15,000-word report that painted a picture of how Farwell groomed Birchmore—who was more than 10 years younger than him—while she was a 15-year-old enrolled in a junior police academy.

"If it hadn't been for Laura, there wouldn't have been the deeper investigation," said Plunkett, also an assistant teaching

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professor at the college. “That culture would have perpetuated, and more young people, more Sandra Birchmores, would have been victimized.”

writing.”

Chuck Plunkett,
director, CU
News Corps

Judges who reviewed entries remarked on the significance and impact of her work.

“The story of Sandra Birchmore’s killing makes me sick to my stomach—outraged,” said Ben Markus, an investigative reporter for Colorado Public Radio and judge for the contest. “That is a testament to the *Boston Globe*’s dogged reporting, without which a police officer might never have been charged with her murder.”

Another judge, John Ingold, praised the dedication and time that went into the reporting.

“This entry is an extraordinary example of what can happen when journalists refuse to give up. It is a reminder of the impact that quality journalism can have,” said Ingold, a reporter for The Colorado Sun.

About the Nakkula Award

The Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting honors the late Al Nakkula, a 46-year veteran of the *Rocky Mountain News*, whose tenacity made him a legendary police reporter. This year, nearly 40 national media outlets submitted entries to a panel of five judges: Ingold; Markus; Brian Malone, a Colorado-based documentary filmmaker; Vicky Collins (Jour’80), publisher of Bucket List Community Cafe; and Plunkett.

Each year, Nakkula contest judges look for stories that meet the highest journalistic standards, help readers understand complex issues and solutions, show a commitment to community, and bring about societal change. The competition is sponsored by the journalism department at CMCI and the Denver Press Club, and has been awarded annually since 1991. [More on the Nakkula Award.](#)

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